R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 017 404 RE 001 114

SUMMER READERS.

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PUB DATE AUG 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.88 20P.

DESCRIPTORS- *LIBRARY SURVEYS, *AGE GROUPS, *LIBRARY COLLECTIONS, *CHILDRENS BOOKS, *PUBLIC LIBRARIES, READING HABITS, LIBRARY MATERIALS, SUPPLEMENTARY READING MATERIALS, LIBRARY RESEARCH, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, INDIANA UNIVERSITY,

THE LIBRARY RECORDS OF A MIDWESTERN PUBLIC LIBRARY WERE EXAMINED TO DETERMINE WHICH AGE GROUPS VISIT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY DURING THE SUMMER, WHICH AGE GROUP READS THE GREATEST NUMBER OF BOOKS, AND HOW MANY OF THE VOLUMES CIRCULATED ARE LISTED IN THE "CHILDREN'S CATALOG" AS QUALITY LITERATURE. DATA COMPILED WITHIN A 6-DAY PERIOD REVEALED THAT--(1) MORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN THAN ADULTS VISITED THE PUBLIC LIBRARY DURING THE SUMMER, (2) THE CHILDREN PATRONS FELL WITHIN THE AGE RANGE OF 5 TO 16, WHILE BOYS WERE INTERESTED IN THE LIBRARY AT THE AGE OF 7 TO 9 AND GIRLS AT THE AGE OF 7 TO 12, (3) AS A MIXED GROUP, THE 8-YEAR-OLDS CHECKED OUT THE GREATEST NUMBER OF BOOKS LISTED IN THE "CHILDREN'S CATALOG," AND (4) 21 PERCENT OF 1,421 VOLUMES CIRCULATED WERE LISTED AS QUALITY LITERATURE IN THE "CHILDREN'S CATALOG." SEVERAL PROBLEMS NEEDING FURTHER RESEARCH ARE SUGGESTED, AND A BIBLIOGRAPHY IS INCLUDED. (NS)

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BY

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Education P503, School of Education,
Indiana University
August, 1967

RE001 114

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Virginia Downing

Introduction

The establishment by federal funds of new kinds of educational programs calling for library services, and the increased action by school districts to provide elementary school library programs have caused elementary educators and the public at large to realize that a student deprived of good library service is a student deprived of good education.

The main objective of a children's library program has been described as putting the right book in the hands of the right child at the right time. Over two thousand books have been published for children in the past several years.[1] The wide variety of books published now are designed for all types of readers. Publishers have provided books of interest for the beginning reader as well as the slow learner. The paperback that has been put into some public libraries as well as school libraries has gained many fans among children. It has provided a cheap, diversified reading material especially in the primary school at the stage where children's reading taste's jell. Topics range widely in the content of these paperbacks and they are enjoying a new status among educators and librarians.[2]

In our society reading is a necessary tool for functioning. Beyond this reason for learning to read, it is hoped that children will enjoy many of the satisfactions gained from reading. Books also serve special needs and sometimes help children to understand their problems.[3]

Primary teachers are well aware of what happens to reading skills if children aren't encouraged to read during the summer. Some librarians and teachers take the opposite position; their feeling is that the summer is all too short and children should be encouraged to read, but allowed to choose what they please for pleasure reading. Many classics found on these book lists as quality literature are necessary only for a child who is studying 19th century literature or a special literary trend.[4]

This research attempted to determine if children select books that are considered quality literature. For the purpose of this study quality literature shall be defined as all titles listed in the Children's Catalog published by H. W. Wilson Company of New York. This research recognizes that it is but one selection aid; however, it is one of the most comprehensive lists commonly used by children's librarians. The volumes listed include fiction and non-fiction. They are chosen by consultants who represent librarians and their associates all over the United States. Listings are kept as up-to-date as possible without sacrificing older books of enduring value. Consultants are appointed by the two divisions

of the American Library Association. The listing of a title is determined by the consultants not by any publisher or member of the editorial staff of the Children's Catalog.[5]

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to observe what age groups go to the public library during the summer, which age group reads the greatest number of books, and how many of the titles circulated are listed in the Children's Catalog.

Review of Related Research

There have been investigations of the aspects that attract children to different types of books. *Studies indicate* that there has been little change in the factors in literature that appeal to children.[6] However, teachers and librarians are coping with a two-fold problem. First, there are so many books on the market of mediocre quality that if a child is not guided to quality literature he may never find it in the vast number of titles offered. And secondly, to be most effective quality literature needs to be read at a certain age and stage of the individual's development to provide the rich experiences of lasting value to the young reader.

A study of library users in a metropolitan area

included information on factors that are changing the library's public. They report an increase in the school-age population, changes in curricula that emphasize mathematics and science, public recognition of the social responsibility to the poverty stricken, development of communication and new publication forms, such as the paperback, may ultimately affect the use of public libraries and their long range plans.[7]

This researcher could find no statistics that would indicate the library habits of the elementary school child.

Hypothesis

Children who go to the public library do not choose to read books that are listed in the Children's Catalog for summer reading.

Methods of Research

The data for this research were compiled in a certain midwestern public library which has one floor set aside as a children's library. The population of the town is 7,558. The children's section of this library is fifteen years old and contains 10,021 volumes.[8] The location of the library is easily accessible to the majority of the population.

The head librarian was the only member of the staff that was aware of the exact nature of data being collected. This arrangement made it impossible for staff members of the

children's library to make suggestions to the patrons that would in any way affect the results of the data.

Four by six cards were prepared for the recording of the author, title, and call number of each volume circulated. Each title was checked to see if it was listed in the Children's Catalog and it's rating was recorded in a special place on the same card. The patron's library card number recorded at the top of this card gave the clue as to the age and sex of the patron who selected the title.

The following assumptions were in operation during the six day period that data were compiled.

1. Children are not required to go to the public library during the summer months.
2. Children who check books out of the public library have mastered the skills necessary to read the particular volumes they select.
3. Children who go to the public library in the summer are interested in books and the benefits derived from reading.
4. Children read the books they take from the public library.

The following table shows the circulation record for the six day period during which data were compiled in the children's library with a corresponding record of the adult circulation during this same period.

TABLE 1. CIRCULATION RECORDS OF THE ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SECTIONS OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHILDREN'S LIBRARY	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Non-Fiction	82	50	67	42	49	62
Fiction	244	207	157	168	146	183
Total Circulation	326	257	224	210	195	245
ADULT LIBRARY						
Non-Fiction	75	35	49	47	58	34
Fiction	86	36	76	68	48	82
Total Circulation	161	71	125	115	106	116

Examination of the library records shows that this was a typical week with 1,457 volumes being circulated from the Children's Library. The chart also represents the normal trend for adult summer reading in this community.

The office of this community's school system show that there are 886 boys and 840 girls between the ages of six and twelve enrolled in their elementary schools. None of the elementary buildings have a central library. The public library has a potential of 1726 patrons to serve between the ages of six and twelve during the summer months.[10] This total does not include other children in rural areas that hold library cards.

According to Table 1 adults as well as children seem to prefer fiction. Saturday and Monday are the days children choose to use the library. During this particular week adults

agreed that Monday was a good day to use the library with Wednesday as their next choice.

Circulation of adult fiction and non-fiction totals 694 volumes. Even though we are not concerned with adults in this study, it is of value to note that if the circulation in the children's section should drop 50% in the winter when school monopolizes much of the children's time, the children's library would still circulate the greatest number of volumes.

Winter circulation in the children's section does drop 50%, however children use the library for reference services.

A breakdown of the data according to age groups and sex of the children who used this public facility during the period which data were compiled is in Table 2.

TABLE 2. AGE AND SEX OF PATRONS

AGE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
5	0	1	1
6	5	3	8
7	32	24	56
8	27	39	66
9	29	22	51
10	23	30	53
11	11	32	43
12	11	24	35
13	0	3	3
14	0	1	1
15	1	0	1
16	0	1	1
TOTAL	119	180	319

This table shows an eleven year span in the age of patrons. The majority fell within a five year span of ages seven through twelve.

Boys between the ages of seven and nine are the most interested in the library. Girls seem to be attracted to the

library for a longer period of time from ages seven through twelve. Children of age eight used the library the most. According to Huck and Young, this age group has attained independent reading skills and has discovered reading as an enjoyable hobby.[11]

At the age of thirteen there is a notable drop in the number of patrons attracted to the children's section. In this particular library this age group can find a supply of literature geared to their particular interests in the adult section of this library. Many titles are duplicated just in case there is some stigma attached to getting one's books from the children's section. It is quite possible that the patron of age thirteen and fourteen is not represented accurately in this data.

It was found in tabulating the data that eight year olds also check out the most books. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the circulation for the week in regard to age, and sex.

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF BOOKS CIRCULATED ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

AGE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
5	0	6	6
6	7	16	23
7	124	92	216
8	139	211	350
9	203	102	305
10	70	131	201
11	46	118	164
12	31	104	135
13	0	10	10
14	0	2	2
15	8	0	8
16	0	1	1
TOTAL	628	793	1421

Table 3 shows us that in terms of numbers the eight year olds checked out the most books. When the numbers are broken down as to sex, eight year old girls took home the most books, and the nine year old boys were the second largest

group. Greatest number of volumes were checked out by children that fell in seven, eight and nine year age groups.

The boys of all age groups checked out 628 volumes, and the girls checked out 793 volumes, making a total of 1421 volumes. Total circulation for the children's section was 1457 during the period that data were compiled. It was necessary to disqualify 36 volumes because they were checked out by adult patrons.

Table 4 is designed to show how many volumes out of the total circulated were listed in the Children's Catalog as quality literature that has demonstrated usefulness in elementary and public libraries in every part of the United States.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF BOOKS CIRCULATED THAT WERE LISTED IN THE CHILDREN'S CATALOG.

AGE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
5	0	3	3
6	2	10	12
7	26	21	47
8	20	66	86
9	36	17	53
10	9	24	33
11	10	26	36
12	5	24	29
13	0	3	3
14	0	1	1
15	1	0	1
16	0	0	0
TOTAL	109	195	304

Eight year old girls and nine year old boys read the most books that were listed in the Children's Catalog while as a mixed group the eight year old patrons read the greatest

number of listed titles. There was no available data to indicate that there are more titles listed for the eight or nine year old than any other age group. Youngsters this age are independent readers. They like to explore new subjects and often go back to an old favorite and reread it several times. They choose easy books and more difficult ones; occasionally they try some adult fiction. It is not unusual for this age child to read a book a day. [12]

Of the 1421 volumes circulated 294 of them were listed in the Children's Catalog. This means that .206 or 21% of the volumes that circulated were quality literature. The Children's Catalog lists 3,310 volumes. The 294 listed volumes that were checked out that week represent 8.88% of those books considered quality literature. One out of every 4.8 books that circulated that week was considered quality literature.

Implications of Data

Final conclusions and recommendations cannot be drawn from this limited study but some observations can be made. The elementary school children of this midwestern town are attracted to the children's library and circulate more books than does the adult section of the library. The children are likely to visit the library on Monday with a preference for fiction. More girls are patrons than boys. Eight year old

boys and girls read more books for pleasure during the summer than any other age group. The greatest number of listed titles are read by eight year old boys and girls.

It should be remembered that any recommended list will include books that will appeal to some children to a greater degree and to others not at all. None of these lists should be considered musts for any child or as excluding all books not listed. Any recommended list is the means by which children may learn to evaluate books and discriminate between transitory and long term excellence.[13]

Further Research

The level of culture of the community could be determined by the size of the percentage using the library as opposed to the potential.

Does the level of education of the parents of patrons have anything to do with their reading interests?

Do the roles of the male and female in our culture determine their reading habits?

Since listed titles in the Children's Catalog are judged by adults and their standards, would this have a direct bearing on the popularity and non-frequency of their selection in the public library.

Of the total potential patrons of the children's library in this midwestern town only 11% are using the library.

Does the unrestricted activity of the summer promote or discourage reading?

What factors were involved that made the circulation greater in the children's section of the library than in the adult section?

Out of the potential boy patrons, 16% of the total boy potential are using the library. Out of the potential girl patrons, 21% of the total girl potential are using the library. Does this community offer more activities for boys than for girls that would limit their use of leisure time?

How many children that are enrolled in the summer remedial program use the library? Does the remedial program stimulate or retard use of the children's library?

If the library were open more hours per day, seven days per week, would the total circulation increase and attract new patrons?

Is the level of achievement in school greater among the patrons of the children's library than the potential who did not choose to use the library?

Is the library an effective tool in this community, in regard to the number of patrons using it as opposed to the per cent of potential patrons not using this facility?

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5. Children's Catalog, p. 5.

6. Huck and Young, op. cit., p. 6.

7. Bundy, M. L., "Metropolitan Library Use," Wilson Library Bulletin, vol. 41, p. 953.

8. Library Records, midwestern town, July 1967.

9. Ibid., circulation records, July, 1967.

10. Superintendent of Schools.

11. Huck and Young, op. cit., p. 10.

12. Larrick, N., A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading, p. 77.

13. Frank, J., op. cit. p. 50.